SPORT

Abbas powers Lahore Whites to victory over Multan, Bahawalpur rout Karachi Blues

LAHORE: Fast bowler Mohammad Abbas' 10-wicket haul in the match led Lahore Whites to a six-wicket win over Multan at the Marghazar Cricket Ground in Islamabad on the third day of their Quaid-e-Azam Trophy fifth-round match on Saturday.

In another result-oriented game, Bahawalpur defeated Karachi Blues by eight wickets at the Imran Khan Cricket Stadium in Peshawar.

After resuming their second innings on an overnight score of 122-3, Multan were bowled out for 199 with Imran Butt top-scoring with 71.

Abbas bagged yet another five-wicket haul to finish with 10 wickets in the game. This was right-armer's 14th 10-wicket show in first-class cricket which took his wickets tally to 23 in four matches of the ongoing tournament. The Test pacer was declared man-of-the-match.

Lahore Whites reached the 81-run target while losing four wickets in the process. Kashif Ali claimed two wickets for Multan.

As Bahawalpur resumed on the third day while requiring 178 runs for victory at the Imran Khan Cricket Stadium, Saad Khan, who top-scored with 61 in the first innings, struck 103 not out with the help of 17 fours to lift his side to win over Karachi Blues. Saad was named man-of-the-match.

Saad shared an unbroken 166-run stand for the third wicket with Mohammad Ammar (70 not out). Mushtaq Ahmed took two wickets for Karachi Blues.

At the Shoaib Akhtar Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi, Peshawar led by 106 runs against Faisalabad with four second-innings wickets in hand when stumps were drawn.

Iftikhar Ahmed was unbeaten on 54 while wicket-keeper/batter Mohammad Haris made 38.

For Faisalabad, Afaq Afridi took three wickets for 36 while Jahandad Khan picked up two.

Earlier, recommencing their first innings at 309-7, Faisalabad posted 384 all out. Faham-ul-Haq, who had scored his maiden century on Friday, added 20 runs to his overnight score and was dismissed for 157.

For Peshawar, captain Sajid Khan claimed three wickets for 84.

Fata, who were made to follow on by Islamabad, reached 284 for four when stumps were drawn at the Abbottabad Cricket Stadium.

Khushdil Shah (159) struck his first century of the tournament and third of the career.

Earlier, resuming their first innings on 213 for seven, Fata totalled 281 all out. Rehan Afridi top-scored with 91 while Sameen Gul remained unbeaten on 43.

For Islamabad, Hunain Shah took four wickets, and Musa Khan and Shayan Sheikh grabbed three apiece.

Abbottabad, after being asked to follow on by Sialkot and resuming their second innings at 37-1 one, reached 331-8 at stumps at the Diamond Cricket Ground in Islamabad.

Opener Shahzaib Khan scored 131, his maiden first-class century and Khalid Usman contributed 83 while batting at number eight. Abbottabad lead by only 38 runs.

For Sialkot, Mohammad Ali took three wickets for 61 while Mohammad Hasnain, who claimed five wickets in the first innings, claimed two.

Sialkot in their first innings had posted 385 all out before sending Abbottabad packing for 92.—Agencies

BURNLEY: Arsenal's Declan Rice (top) heads to score during the Premier League match against Burnley at Turf Moor on Saturday. —Reuters

Arsenal cruise against Burnley, United held

LONDON: Arsenal brushed Burnley aside 2-0 on Saturday to open up a seven-point lead at the top of the Premier League as struggling Nottingham Forest held in-form Manchester United to a 2-2 draw.

Mikel Arteta's Gunners have won five league games in a row to position themselves as firm favourites to end their painful two-decade wait to be crowned English champions.

Viktor Gyokeres headed Arsenal ahead following a Declan Rice corner in the first half at Turf Moor for his first league goal since mid-September — yet more joy for the set-piece specialists.

England midfielder Rice himself headed home to double the visitors' lead in the 35th minute and put them in total control.

"The first half was exceptional -- we scored two goals and gave nothing away," Arteta told the BBC. "That was the platform. We had to make a few changes and didn't have that much control in the second half. Defending was exceptional again, we didn't give anything."

Arsenal, who have now won nine games in a row in all competitions, have enviable options in attack but their team is built on a rock-solid defence that has conceded just three league goals in 10 games this season.

Ruben Amorim's Manchester United, seeking their fourth straight league win, appeared set to climb to second in the table when leading 1-0 at the City Ground courtesy of Casemiro's first-half opener.

But Forest, who had not scored a league goal since September 20, roared back after the break as their confidence flooded back.

Morgan Gibbs-White headed the home side level in the 48th minute before Nicolo Savona tapped in just two minutes later to complete a dramatic turnaround.

But Amad Diallo levelled with a sweet volley in the 81st minute to rescue a point for United, who have been much improved in recent weeks after a poor start to the season.

Diallo said United were disappointed to go home with a single point after their recent winning run.

"We have confidence now," he told Sky Sports. "We believe in the manager and the system. We are trying to do our best. We believe in the manager like he believes in us."

Forest, who last month appointed Sean Dyche as manager to replace the sacked Ange Postecoglou, remain in the relegation zone, four points behind 17th-placed Burnley.

Rock-bottom Wolverhampton Wanderers are an alarming eight points from safety after a miserable 3-0 defeat against Fulham at Craven Cottage.

Ryan Sessegnon put the visitors ahead early and Wolves were reduced to 10 men when Emmanuel Agbadou was dismissed later in the first half.

Harry Wilson doubled Fulham's lead in the 62nd minute and an own goal from Yerson Mosquera completed the misery for Wolves.

Crystal Palace won for the first time in four league games, courtesy of a header from Jean-Philippe Mateta and an own goal from Brentford's Nathan Collins, which made it 2-0.

The evergreen Danny Welbeck netted his sixth Premier League goal of the season and there were also two for Diego Gomez as Brighton & Hove Albion pummelled Leeds United 3-0.—AFP

RIYADH: Aryna Sabalenka celebrates with the WTA Number One trophy at the King Saud University Indoor Arena on Saturday.—Reuters

Swiatek swats aside Keys for winning start at WTA Finals

RIYADH: World number two Iga Swiatek began her quest for a second WTA Finals trophy with a 6-1, 6-2 win over Australian Open champion Madison Keys in their round robin clash at the season-ending championships on Saturday.

The 2023 champion made a fast start in the Riyadh showpiece, winning 12 of the first 14 points to take a 3-0 lead as a rusty Keys struggled to find rhythm on serve in her first match since a stunning US Open first-round defeat in late August.

Swiatek continued to pile on the pressure on her American opponent, who looked out of sorts in her first appearance in the season finale since her debut in 2016, and the Pole raced away to take the opening set dropping only one game.

The pair swapped breaks at the start of the second set, but an untimely double fault from Keys handed the advantage back to Swiatek, who made no mistake from there to wrap up the victory on serve in only 61 minutes.

The WTA Finals, which features the top eight singles players and doubles teams in the world, has a record prize pool of $15.5 million and offers 1,500 points. The tournament culminates with the finals at King Saud University Sports Arena on November 8.

In the second match from the Serena Williams Group later on Saturday, Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina beat Wimbledon and US Open runner-up Amanda Anisimova of the United States 6-3, 6-1.

On Sunday, the top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka begins her bid for a maiden WTA Finals title when the Belarusian takes on two-times major finalist Jasmine Paolini of Italy in the Steffi Graf Group before holder Coco Gauff meets fellow American Jessica Pegula.

Unlike in the previous two editions of the tournament, the year-end world number one ranking will not be up for grabs with US Open champion Sabalenka assured of finishing on top after building a 1,675-point lead over Swiatek heading to Riyadh.—Reuters

Diomande dazzles in Leipzig's win over Stuttgart

BERLIN: RB Leipzig's teenage forward Yan Diomande scored one goal and forced another as his side beat VfB Stuttgart 3-1 at home on Saturday to climb back into second place in the Bundesliga, provisionally two points behind leaders Bayern Munich.

Leipzig returned to second spot after Borussia Dortmund had leapfrogged the Red Bulls with a 1-0 win at Augsburg on Friday courtesy of forward Serhou Guirassy's first half strike.

Ole Werner's team, who have now won seven of their last eight league matches, have 22 points, two ahead of Dortmund. Stuttgart dropped to fourth on 18.

Leipzig and Stuttgart enjoyed several chances in an exciting opening half before Diomande forced a breakthrough just before halftime.

The 18-year-old Ivorian dribbled down the right and delivered a low cross which Stuttgart defender Jeff Chabot turned into his own net.

Eight minutes into the second half, Diomande danced through three Stuttgart defenders before blasting a low shot into the bottom corner.

Tiago Tomas scored for Stuttgart to cut Leipzig's lead but Romelo made sure of the win when he pounced on an error from visiting goalkeeper Alexander Nuebel and tapped home.

Diomande was one of an array of talented newcomers to join Leipzig in the summer as the club focused on youth in Jurgen Klopp's first transfer window as football coordinator of Leipzig's parent company Red Bull.

Eintracht Frankfurt's struggles continued with a 1-1 draw at last-placed Heidenheim, days after Dortmund booted them out of the German Cup.

Frankfurt's Danish defender Rasmus Kristensen scored in the second half to cancel out Budu Zivzivadze's opener.

The draw leaves Eintracht in sixth, having won just once in their past seven matches in all competitions.

Union Berlin and Freiburg played out a scoreless draw in the German capital, with both sides having goals struck off by VAR.

Elsewhere, Borussia Moenchengladbach won their first match of the season with a double from Haris Tabakovic in a 4-0 victory at St Pauli.

Jens Stage scored an equaliser with four minutes left as Werder Bremen snatched a 1-1 draw at lowly Mainz 05.—Agencies

LEIPZIG: RB Leipzig's Christoph Baumgartner (R) vies for the ball with VfB Stuttgart's Atakan Karazor during their Bundesliga match at the Red Bull Arena on Saturday.—Reuters

Villarreal crush Rayo to go second

VILA-REAL: Villarreal continued their strong start to the season by thrashing Rayo Vallecano 4-0 to climb above Barcelona into second place in La Liga provisionally on Saturday.

Champions Barca host Elche on Sunday.

Marcelino Garcia Toral's Villarreal moved provisionally within four points of leaders Real Madrid with their emphatic home win over Rayo, 10th.

Villarreal's key man was playmaker Alberto Moleiro, who joined from Las Palmas in the summer. He scored a fine individual goal and set up another at the Estadio de la Ceramica.

Veteran striker Gerard Moreno opened the scoring after 22 minutes, netting for the second consecutive game.

The 33-year-old forward escaped Pep Chavarria in the box with some clever footwork and fired into the far corner.

Moleiro added a superb second after the break, driving forward from his own half, and as Rayo stood off him, he slotted home from outside the area.

The midfielder teed up Santi Comesana for the third two minutes later.

Ayoze Perez grabbed his first goal of the season for Villarreal's fourth, as he begins to find form after injury.—AFP

Mikaeel wins ITF World Jr title

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Mikaeel Ali Baig defeated Kristijonas Milasauskas to lift the boys singles title of the ITF Pakistan Ali Embroidery World Junior Tennis Championship J-30 (Leg-2) here at the PTF-SDA Tennis Complex on Saturday.

Mikaeel overcame his Lithuanian opponent 6-3, 7-6(3) to win the decider.Turkey's Ecrin Lal Yavuz outclassed compatriot Serife Pelin Sari 6-0, 6-0 to grab the girls' singles title in style.—Sports Reporter

Sinner crushes Zverev to reach Paris Masters final

PARIS: Jannik Sinner moved to within one win of reclaiming the world number one ranking with a 6-0, 6-1 dismantling of Alexander Zverev in the Paris Masters semi-finals on Saturday, setting up a final clash with Felix Auger-Aliassime.

The Italian raced to remarkable thrashing of reigning champion Zverev at La Defense Arena in just 61 minutes.

Sinner, who had powered to a 6-3, 6-3 win over fifth-seeded Ben Shelton in the quarter-finals on Friday, will replace rival Carlos Alcaraz at the top of the rankings with victory over Auger-Aliassime on Sunday.

Canada's Auger-Aliassime reached the second Masters 1000 final of his career by beating in-form Kazakh Alexander Bublik in the first semi-final.

Sinner and Auger-Aliassime have split their four previous meetings, although the world number two has won the past two including in this year's US Open semi-finals.

"It's always good to play him," Auger-Aliassime said of facing Sinner. "I feel like he pushes players to be very, very disciplined tactically and to execute their game, you know, almost perfectly in order to win."

Four-time Grand Slam champion Sinner is now on a 25-match winning streak on indoor hard courts.

He is targeting his fifth title of the season after last weekend adding the Vienna Open trophy to his Australian Open, Wimbledon and China Open triumphs from earlier in the year.

Third seed Zverev made a dreadful start Saturday, with his forehand badly misfiring.

Sinner needed just 15 minutes to take a double-break and a 3-0 lead, sealed by a crushing cross-court winner.

Another wild forehand saw Zverev broken for a third successive service game, before Sinner wrapped up a bagel set with an ace.

It was the first time Zverev, who mustered just one winner in the opener, had lost a set to love since the 2023 French Open semi-finals against Casper Ruud.

The German showed some resilience in the first game of the second set, though, staving off a break point as he finally got on the board.

But the resistance was short-lived, as Sinner broke in the third game when Zverev ballooned another groundstroke long.

Zverev called for the trainer but his race had long been run.

Sinner completed the demolition when an ailing Zverev dumped another shot into the net.

Ninth seed Auger-Aliassime clinched a 7-6 (7/3), 6-4 victory as Bublik crumbled from 4-1 up in the second set of his maiden Masters 1000 semi-final.

"It's a pleasure. All finals of Masters 1000s are a dream, but (especially) in Paris, a tournament with so much history and important past champions," said Auger-Aliassime.

Auger-Aliassime climbs above Lorenzo Musetti into the eighth and last qualifying spot for the ATP Finals in Turin later this month.

The 25-year-old can seal his second appearance in the season-ending tournament with victory in Sunday's showpiece match.

Auger-Aliassime fell just short of a Masters title at the 2024 Madrid Open against Andrey Rublev.

Bublik, who made the French Open quarter-finals in Paris earlier this year, can no longer reach the Finals despite an excellent year in which he has won four ATP titles.—AFP

PARIS: Germany's Alexander Zverev eyes a return against Jannik Sinner of Italy during their semi-final at the Paris Masters on Saturday.—AFP